

health care access for veterans, especially those living in southwest Kansas. He constantly worked on opportunities to bring the Department of Veterans Affairs to the area for general health care while finding ways to transport veterans to a VA regional hospital for specialty care. L.D. was one of many veterans whose efforts were rewarded when a VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic was opened at Ft. Dodge, Kansas, in 1999. He provided me valuable counsel and never let me forget that our Nation's veterans deserve the best health care possible.

I signed a picture taken of myself and L.D. during one of his trips to Washington, DC to represent the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I was proud and humbled to know the picture was displayed during his funeral. On that picture, I wrote the following words. "I wish Congress would serve our veterans as well as you and all veterans have served our country." Veterans have brought honor to our country through their military service. It is only right that their government honor its commitment to them.

In addition to his service to veterans, L.D. was devoted to his family. Over the course of their 63 year marriage, L.D. and his wife, Esther, were committed parents and grandparents. They raised twelve children and enjoyed 30 grandchildren.

In the many important roles L.D. filled in his life, he served out of a sense of duty. He made his community better and his Nation safer. I join L.D.'s many friends and admirers in paying tribute to a great man. My thoughts and prayers go out to Esther and the Minor family during this time of loss.

IN MEMORY OF DALLAS SAMS

HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and memory of Dallas Sams of Staples, Minnesota, former state senator, father and dedicated advocate for Minnesota's environment. He passed away last Monday after a hard fight against cancer.

During his sixteen years in the Minnesota State Senate, Dallas never forgot who he was or where he came from. A tireless advocate for rural Minnesota, he never passed up an opportunity to talk about the beauty of the lakes and fields that surrounded his home. In the last few years it was hard to have a discussion with him without discussing his most recent addition or renovation to his beloved cabin, his love for which was second only to his love for his children Seth, Stacia, Jordan, Mitchell and Michael, as well as his wife Mary Beth.

Dallas nurtured his passion for the land and the environment throughout his life. As a dairy farmer and agriculture management teacher he developed a hands-on knowledge and appreciation of our state's natural environment. His understanding of the vital importance of a clean and healthy ecosystem was clear in his work at the state legislature. One of his greatest accomplishments as the foremost advocate for ethanol in the state was the passage of his legislation mandating the Nation's highest ethanol and gasoline blend standard in

2005. He supported efforts to involve more young people in family farms in order to guarantee the success of the next generation in farming as well as made sure that summer youth employment programs in Minneapolis got adequately funded. His most sought after goal and one which was sadly never accomplished during his lifetime was the successful passage of legislation dedicating a portion of Minnesota's sales tax toward maintaining and protecting the environment that he loved so much. Perhaps this year will be the year his dream will finally be accomplished.

While history will record his accomplishments in terms of legislation passed and projects funded, those who knew him, whether for a lifetime or just for a few moments, will remember the passing of a man universally known for his humor, humility and honor. The true measure of our love and admiration for Dallas will not be found in the laws he passed but in the lives he touched through his good-humored nature, ready laugh and mischievous smile.

TO PRESERVE THE WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER ACT OF 2007

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, at the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing on March 5, 2007 at Walter Reed Army Hospital, I asked the top brass who testified whether designating Walter Reed for closing in the midst of a war had contributed to any instability of personnel at the Walter Reed Hospital Garrison. Each of them responded unequivocally that the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) closing for Walter Reed had had a destabilizing effect on the hospital. Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard Cody testified, "You're trying to get the best people to come here to work, and they know in three years that this place will close down and they're not sure whether they will be afforded the opportunity to move to the new Walter Reed National Military Center . . . that causes some issues." This and other testimony, as well as recent Washington Post revelations, have contributed directly to my introduction today of the "Preserve Walter Reed Army Medical Center Act of 2007." Several senior leaders of the relevant committees have since agreed that Walter Reed should be taken off the BRAC list and should remain open.

There have been no complaints about the hospital's world-class treatment or the hospital itself, which was built only in 1977, but the hearing laid bare a broken military health care outpatient system and bureaucracy in need of both long term and short term remedies. The epicenter of this system is its "crown jewel," Walter Reed Hospital, whose physical and administrative outpatient care have rapidly become a potent symbol of a national breakdown that will require systemic remedies for military and veteran hospitals across the country. However, because the problems are both deep and wide, we must find immediate solutions at each facility while the military outpatient systems are freed from knotted bureaucratic tangles.

A first step to take to stop the proverbial bleeding of staff and talent is to reverse the madness of closing the nation's best and most vital military hospital in the middle of a shooting war and the war on terrorism. This bill to reverse the closing of the Walter Reed base will help stabilize personnel who, as the generals testified, scatter once they believe a base will close. At a time when Walter Reed is receiving large numbers of injured soldiers and a military surge may mean many more, closing the Nation's premier military hospital should be unthinkable.

Moreover, leaving Walter Reed on the BRAC list has become increasingly untenable because closing the hospital carries with it a promise and an intention to build a new hospital by 2011. In the foreseeable future, no one expects the administration or Congress to come forward with the required \$2 billion to construct the proposed new Walter Reed in Bethesda, Maryland, and much more for moving costs and new equipment, given a huge and mounting deficit, and certainly not in the middle of a war, when funds must be committed to soldiers, their families, veterans and the war itself. Nevertheless, a repeal bill is necessary because, if Walter Reed continues to be listed for closing, Congress will continue to send a signal to personnel to make their career decisions accordingly. As is already occurring, Walter Reed will find it increasingly difficult to retain and hire personnel, including vital civilian clinical and medical personnel, particularly the very best; who the Nation expects will work at Walter Reed to attend to the most seriously injured military men and women.

Further, Walter Reed is an essential and integral component of the Emergency Preparedness Plan for the Nation's Capital. The hospital is located just 5½ miles from the White House, 6½ miles from the Capitol and 6 miles from the Washington Convention Center. Its location in the city is strategically important. If moved to Bethesda, traffic and distance would place Walter Reed outside of the homeland security system here that has been developed specifically to take account of the location of the top-tier Federal presence, officials and employees. Because of the location here Walter Reed is essential to treat mass casualties in the case of a terrorist attack. The hospital is part of the Emergency Preparedness Plan for the District, a system for treatment of acute illness or trauma of people requiring hospitalization from a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive incident. The specialized needs are above the District's hospital capacity. Thus, the District needs Walter Reed's available resources in order to comply with this Department of Homeland Security mandate.

I fully recognize that reversing a BRAC decision is and should be rare. However, particularly after what we have learned about unmet needs for injured members of the military returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan, this step is minimally necessary to stabilize operations at the Nation's most important hospital base for caring for our most seriously injured members of the military. Far from establishing a precedent, no other military facility stands on the same footing or has so central a mission. The question should not be can we take Walter Reed off the closing list but, why was this hospital scheduled to close in the first place, as our soldiers were engaged in a shooting

war with no end in sight? Another question should be do we truly intend to spend billions of dollars on bricks and mortar for a new hospital instead of on our soldiers and their facilities?

Walter Reed, like other military hospitals, will not be what it should be immediately. However, we can immediately demonstrate that Congress means business by moving to stabilize the Nation's premier military medical hospital and then getting on with the rest of the job.

LETTER OF IDAHO GOVERNOR
BUTCH OTTER REGARDING "THE
EVOLVING WEST"

HON. BILL SALI

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Mr. SALI. Madam Speaker, Idaho Governor Butch Otter recently sent a letter to House Natural Resources Committee Chairman NICK RAHALL regarding a committee oversight hearing on "The Evolving West."

In the eyes of many environmentalists, "the evolving West" means replacing good-paying jobs in forest products, mining, oil and gas and ranching with an economy based on ecotourism and bed and breakfasts. In Idaho, we call this theory part of the "War on the West." Numerous reputable studies show that jobs created by natural-resource-based industries are several times higher than seasonal jobs based on tourism. Working families in Idaho cannot support themselves on seasonal tourism jobs.

Governor Otter clearly and concisely defends the economy, culture and livelihoods of Western when he states:

The entrepreneurs, workers and families who devote their lives to agriculture, timber and mining have "evolved" with the landscape and the marketplace for generations. Such challenges as energy and transportation costs and reliability are changing their world at this moment.

But those are market-driven changes—issues of supply, demand and geography. Our people, and our way of life, deserve better than have our government further "evolve" them out of business.

Governor Otter further articulated the issue by stating "Most of the challenges facing such resource industries as agriculture, timber and mining in Idaho and throughout the West are the result of Federal Government policies that unreasonably restrict access, overregulate activity and discourage sustainable growth."

Madam Speaker, I would like to insert Governor Otter's letter in the RECORD and encourage my colleagues to read it.

BOISE, ID,
February 28, 2007.

Hon. NICK J. RAHALL II,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN RAHALL: On behalf of the State of Idaho, and the people who value our lifestyle and their traditional resource-based livelihoods, thank you for the opportunity to enter a statement into the record for this hearing on the "Evolving West."

It's important to put "evolving" in context. The usual connotation evokes gradual change resulting from natural influences of environment and circumstance. However,

there is nothing gradual or natural about change in the West.

Most of the challenges facing such resource industries as agriculture, timber and mining in Idaho and throughout the West are the result of federal government policies that unreasonably restrict access, over-regulate activity and discourage sustainable growth.

From neglectful absentee land management that supplants local stewardship to on-the-ground environmental myopia, federal programs routinely provide disincentives to progressive collaboration. In a single generation they have changed much of the West from America's gilded hope for independence and self-sufficiency to a gelded collection of servile sycophants hopeful only for another round of government largesse.

Now some promote a "New West" that relegates resource industries to the status of historical relics. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy from those who urge even more federal control over our region's resources in the name of environmental urgency or modern realities. They blithely, yet earnestly, disregard the real people and real communities that were established and nurtured by previous pendulum swings in national priorities.

Make no mistake: Tourism, technology and even service are important and growing segments of our economy. They are adding to the diversity and vitality of Idaho and the West. However, they are no panacea for a region inhabited by people who have a special connection with the land, who understand their responsibility to it, and who still value self-reliance and individualism.

About 10 percent of Idaho's 1.4 million residents work in the forests, fields and on the land. The combined industries generate nearly \$10 billion a year in receipts. The residual impact generates thousands more jobs and additional billions of dollars.

As a member of Congress representing Idaho's 1st District, and now as Idaho's Governor, I see, hear and experience the resilience of people struggling to maintain their livelihood in resource-based industries every day. These citizens work through burdensome policies and regulations to provide for their families, support their communities and provide valuable products for U.S. citizens and the world.

Eighty-eight percent of Idaho is rural. About 63 percent of our landmass is controlled by the federal government. As a result, and to far too great a degree, we are not the architects of our own destiny. Yet the rugged geography and great size of Idaho—the ironically complementary qualities of remoteness and community—still draw people here.

Those people have used their ingenuity and resourcefulness to supply timber, food and a host of value-added products to the world. And our potential is far greater. If given the opportunity by our federal landlords, the people of Idaho could contribute mightily toward meeting America's future energy needs with home-grown, clean-burning renewable fuels found here in the "Evolving West."

Natural resource industries still provide some of the highest-paying jobs in our state. Counties with healthy timber, mining and agriculture operations have the highest per-capita income. The people working in these industries are conscientious stewards of the resources—relying on sound science and state-of-the-art technology to protect and wisely manage the natural resources for all to enjoy.

Viewing natural resource industries as "extractive" or "consumptive" gives unjustified short shrift to what made—and still makes—the West a dreamscape of opportunity and hope for people around the world.

The entrepreneurs, workers and families who devote their lives to agriculture, timber

and mining have "evolved" with the landscape and the marketplace for generations. Such challenges as energy and transportation costs and reliability are changing their world at this moment.

But those are market-driven changes—issues of supply, demand and geography. Our people, and our way of life, deserve better than to have our government further "evolve" them out of existence.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to address the topic of this hearing. Please accept my warmest personal regards and best wishes for a successful 110th Congress.

As Always—Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"
C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER,
Governor of Idaho.

NATO FREEDOM CONSOLIDATION
ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 987, the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act. In particular, I want to applaud my friend Mr. TANNER, and the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, for taking care to support Ukraine's progress towards NATO membership and designating that country as eligible for assistance under the NATO Participation Act.

Last week, I participated in a meeting between Members of the Congressional Ukrainian Congress and Members of the Ukrainian Parliament. During that meeting, it was suggested that policymakers here in Washington might be experiencing "Ukraine fatigue."

We are not Ukraine fatigued; we are Ukraine concerned. We have seen clearly, both during the Orange Revolution and in last year's parliamentary elections, that democracy works in Ukraine, but we are concerned by what it has produced.

President Yushchenko, and indeed many in Ukraine, have signaled a strong desire to join NATO. While there have been differences of late over the pace at which Ukraine should make progress towards that goal, this legislation takes exactly the right approach in reinforcing our commitment to help Ukraine achieve it.

In particular, we can assist Ukraine in continuing a variety of reforms that not only move the country towards NATO eligibility, but also help the Ukrainian people build a prosperous and stable country more broadly. Further, it is critical that we help the Ukrainian people understand what NATO membership means, both its benefits and its responsibilities.

Again Madam Speaker, I strongly support this legislation to facilitate further expansion of NATO, particularly with regard to assistance for Ukraine, and I urge its passage.

IN HONOR OF JUDGE BRUCE J.
EINHORN IN RECOGNITION OF
HIS EXEMPLARY SERVICE

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2007

Mr. BECERRA. Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today and recognize Judge